



Montana
Board of
Horse
Racing

Planning Session Summary

October 6, 2011

Prepared by:

**Mark Willmarth
Vision West Inc
220 38th Ave NE
Great Falls, MT 59404
406-727-6826
mark@visionwestmt.com**



Overview – Following the regular board meeting of the Montana Board of Horse Racing (MBOHR) on October 6 at the Montana Lottery building in Helena, a planning session was conducted with the MOBHR board, staff, and interested stakeholders. Approximately 20 individuals participated in the planning session, which lasted from 11:30am – 4:00pm with lunch being brought in. The following information is a summary of the small and large group discussions. The goals listed at the end of the document are a draft which the MBOHR board of directors will need to discuss and adopt. These are the five-year goals that were discussed and agreed upon by the participants. The shorter-term objectives/actions were listed underneath each goal statement as possible action items. Again, the board and staff of the MBOHR will need to discuss and decide the specific actions.

In addition to the planning session, an on-line survey was conducted with interested stakeholders. The results were published in a 15-page document that was distributed at the beginning of the meeting. Most participants were able to read at least portions of the survey summary prior to or during the planning session. Sixty-eight people responded to the survey.

What are your hopes for horse racing in Montana in the next 1-5 years? What is one hope we share together? Participants sat in pairs to answer these questions.

- Get our budget straight.
- Solvency – We would like to see growth and living within our budget.
- We have at least five sustainable tracks.
- Create a circuit so that horsemen have an incentive to go from track to track.
- Get the county commissioners on board with horse racing.
- Develop a circuit race with Billings as the last stop – similar to the Kentucky Derby.
- Get more people interested in horseracing; especially young people.
- Have more buckles, saddles, blankets, jackets, etc. as incentives.

Participants were placed into 4 groups. Two groups discussed and recorded their responses to question #1. The other two groups discussed and recorded their responses to question #2.

#1. What are the 3-5 things that you believe are working well with horseracing in Montana?

Hearts

- We have the support of the Governor and the legislature.
- We have the support of Native Americans.
- Miles City and Billings are working well.
- We have a source of revenue that we didn't have before – Simulcast, Fantasy Sports.
- Supportive sponsors.

Diamonds

- Brings affordable excitement and entertainment to communities across the state.
- We have an impeccable testing record and innovator of testing methods in the industry.
- Positive media coverage and human interest stories.
- Generates positive income and employment to communities that have racing.
- Positive support in tough racing atmosphere in Billings and a renewed racing interest in communities that have discontinued racing in the past.

#2. What are the 3-5 things that you believe need work with horse racing in Montana?

Clubs

- Improve public perception
 - Need to sell our product.
 - Promote good perception (entertainment, economic impact)
- Steady income
 - Selectively increase simulcast sites
 - Legislate fantasy sports (stores)
- Maintain five track Statewide Circuit
 - Unite as a state and support each other.
 - Develop base support in each community.
- Promote Montana Breeding Industry with incentives

Spades

- Develop positive collaboration with County Commissioners.
- MBOHR Budget
- Media and network marketing. Use of the Internet, Facebook and Twitter.
- Improved training and racing facilities.
- Improved public relations at the tracks. People representing the racing industry need to be professional (appearance, language, etc.).

What 4-7 Critical Issues need to be addressed by the Montana Board of Horse Racing in the next five years?

We will... We must ...

- 1. Become a financially self-sustaining entity.**
 - a. Create a workable budget by mid October 2011 and continue to develop annual budgets prior to each fiscal year.
- 2. Improve racing and training facilities in Montana.**
- 3. Develop positive collaboration and communication about horse racing in Montana with interested stakeholders.**
 - a. Improve communication from MBOHR to the racing community
 - i. County Commissioners, Track Sponsors, City Councils, Businesses, Legislators.
 - b. Form one voice about Horse Racing in Montana
 - i. Create a professional presentation that is delivered by individuals who have influence within each community.
- 4. Expand the number of people working on MBOHR activities.**
 - a. Develop a Turf Club at each track.
 - b. Identify people in each of the larger communities (Billings, Great Falls, Missoula, Kalispell, & Miles City) who can represent the interests of horseracing.
 - c. Provide awards on an annual basis to the individuals in the racing industry.
- 5. Create a five-track circuit incentive.**
- 6. Explore ways to get more people interested in horseracing, especially younger people.**
 - a. Contact the colleges with equestrian programs.

Suggested Next Steps

- The Montana Board of Horse Racing directors must meet to discuss and adopt a set of goals for the next 5 years.
- Once adopted, the board, with the assistance of interested stakeholders, should discuss and decide on the objectives for the next 12-18 months that will move the organization toward achieving the 5-year goals. During the October 6 board meeting it was decided that a budget would be prepared for the MBOHR by October 14. This specific action item may be included under the “Become a financially self sustaining entity” goal statement if adopted.
- Future board meetings should include discussions on how the MBOHR is achieving the agreed upon goals and objectives.

Montana Board of Horse Racing

The Board of Horse Racing program is responsible for:

- Regulating the live and simulcast horse racing industry;
- Ensuring compliance by approximately 3,500 licensees with state laws and board rules;
- Licensing all racing personnel, establishing race dates for various communities, and establishing veterinary practices and standards in connection with horse racing meets;
- Auditing, supervising and conducting investigations related to the pari-mutuel racing system in Montana. The program work is mandated in Title 2, Chapter 15, and Title 23, Chapter 4, MCA.

Goals for 2011-2016

We will... We must ...

1. **Become a financially self-sustaining entity.**
2. **Improve racing and training facilities in Montana.**
3. **Develop positive collaboration and communication about horse racing in Montana with interested stakeholders.**
4. **Expand the number of people working on MBOHR activities beyond the board of directors and staff.**
5. **Create a five-track circuit incentive.**
6. **Explore ways to get more people interested in horseracing, especially younger people.**

